

## 2.3 Impact on Family Life

### Introduction

You may have heard the joke that has been made about Army life: *'If the Army had wanted you to have a wife, they would have issued you one.'* There are other variations of this theme for each branch of service. Well, times have changed! Today, the military welcomes spouses and families. But though this quote is out of date, the military lifestyle remains unique, and the military mission can still profoundly affect the family. Families have an impact on the military's mission too, both positive and negative.

### The Military Role and Mission

Your life as a family member will be easier if you have an idea of what the Military Mission is and how they can affect you and your family. Take a moment to view [The Military Mission](#) and find out more about your service and how it is part of the Department of Defense, and the Department of Homeland Security.

The mission's impact on family life will change over a service member's or civilian employee's career and will be greatly influenced by a number of factors such as the type of mission and the mission's location and its relationship to higher headquarters missions.

As a service member or civilian employee gains in rank and responsibility, the military's total, global mission has an increasing effect on family life. As a result, you may be called upon to hold the family together because that mission requires another family member's full attention. Therefore, the quality of life for military families will depend upon individual families' resiliency throughout their service members' or civilian employees' careers.

### Seven Traits of Military Families

What have you noticed about military family members who seem to take it all in stride? They all possess the following traits:

- Patriotic
- Adaptable
- Involved and community oriented
- Possess a keen sense of humor
- Have realistic expectations
- Resourceful
- Celebrate adversity

### Patriotic

The military family has a strong sense of patriotism and love of country, realizing that the welfare of the country and its citizens is the primary mission.

### Adaptable

The military family is adaptable. The challenges of mobility, uncertainty, and separation force families to adapt to new cultures, friends, and support systems, and to deal with both positive and negative emotions.

**Involved and Community Oriented**

The military family gets involved in the community at all levels (neighborhood, unit, and city/installation), and they influence others to do likewise.

**Possess a Keen Sense of Humor**

It is often said, 'Laughter is the Best Medicine', and military families use humor to carry them through a wide range of emotions. It helps to find optimism in negative situations-sometimes the humor comes much later.

**Have Realistic Expectations**

What the military will do for you has changed over the years - as has what the military expects of family members. Fifty years ago, spouses did not get an allotment, and even longer ago than that, there was no life insurance for service members. Family members were expected to take in stride the hardships and challenges presented in military living. Today, you are enjoying the best quality of life the American military has ever known. Some families think the military 'should' take care of their every need during family separations, but realistic families do not expect this. They understand it is the responsibility of the military to provide the resources and the skills that empower the family members to take care of themselves. The byword of the military family is readiness. However, the military does provide the resources to assist the family while fostering this independence. This way, the military, service members, civilian employees and family members can achieve both personal and organizational readiness.

**Resourceful**

The military family learns how to 'make do', especially while involved in a permanent change of station move, serving a tour in a foreign country, or enduring the loneliness of family separation.

**Celebrate Adversity**

Celebrating adversity means thriving on challenges, meeting hardship with a smile and rejoicing in change. Military families say they have to...why else would they love the military life?

**Conclusion**

Recent research on families shows that over 85 percent of spouses enjoy the military lifestyle and encourage their husbands and wives to stay in the military. They enjoy it even though service members and civilian employees spend long hours planning, preparing, and training to

defend our nation. This means that the service member or civilian employee will often be away during 'family time'. But the successful military family understands and embraces the challenge. Take a minute to reflect on some experiences that resulted from a family member being away, or busy with the mission, during family time. How were you able to cope? Do you possess the seven traits?

**Seven Traits Exercise**

Which of the following are among the Seven Traits of a Military Family?

1. Patriotic?  
☐ True ☐ False
2. Always ready to Entertain?  
☐ True ☐ False
3. Employable?  
☐ True ☐ False
4. Possess a keen sense of humor?  
☐ True ☐ False
5. Have realistic expectations?  
☐ True ☐ False
6. Resourceful?  
☐ True ☐ False
7. Born in the USA?  
☐ True ☐ False
8. Involved and Community oriented?  
☐ True ☐ False
9. Adaptable?  
☐ True ☐ False
10. Welcoming?  
☐ True ☐ False
11. Fun-Loving?  
☐ True ☐ False
12. Celebrate Adversity?  
☐ True ☐ False

**Answers:**

1) True, 2) False, 3) False, 4) True, 5) True, 6) True, 7) False, 8) True, 9) True, 10) False, 11) False, 12) True

**Resources**

For more information, visit the following sites:

- “Independent Wife Magazine” is an online magazine dedicated to providing information for military wives on the move. Be sure to visit their website at <http://independentwife.hypermart.net/>.
- Keep in touch! Send mail to or from overseas military locations using Flash Mail. Letters can be up to 4 pages and get to or from virtually anywhere in the world—FREE! Simply visit [www.nacec.org/military/](http://www.nacec.org/military/).